

ETON EDUCATION.

A WORD WITH ITS CRITICS.

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In the present day it is the fashion to criticise Eton, and especially Eton education; and, as the criticism is generally based on ignorance, it is often slightly wild and irrelevant. The general idea seems to be that at Eton we are taught very little but Latin and Greek verses; that modern languages and mathematics are more or less neglected; and, finally, that we learn nothing that might be of practical use to us after leaving school. But the virulence of the attack is always directed against Latin verses. "Why," we are asked, "should the poor boys be forced to write Latin poetry? If they must write poetry, let it at least be in English." Heaven forbid! "A poet is born, not made," said Horace; and born poets are no commoner at Eton than anywhere else. Imagine, then, what volumes of trash, painful heartrending trash, would be the effect of an attempt to make Etonians poets! Imagine the task of the master, who would have to correct a hundred copies of such stuff without, perhaps, seeing one good copy! No, there is enough rotten English verse in the air already without requiring more from Eton. Latin verse is different; not being our own tongue, the enormity of our mistakes is not so appalling as it would be if we were to see like mistakes in English, although we dare not guess what Ovid would think of Remove verses, or even of a master's "fair copy." At any rate, our uncertain knowledge of a dead language hides our blunders to some degree. "But what possible good can be derived from writing Latin verses?" says the critic. The answer to this is that it is an art which requires severe and concentrated mental effort; it is easier to write prose than verse, blank

verse than rhyming verse, and rhyming verse than Latin verse. It exercises the full faculties of the mind in a greater degree than any other school subject. And thus, if education is to be a training of the mind, and not merely a learning of what is useful, Latin verses are an ideal exercise. Besides—take notice, O critic—we do not give up our whole time to Latin verses, as you seem to suppose. One copy, which means from two to four hours a week, is all that is imposed upon us.

Would that the Eton curriculum were as simple as that, would that we could give our undivided attention to some one subject, either classical or modern! It is on the other side, if we may say so, that the error lies. A few years ago Eton awoke with a start, finding herself, as she imagined, behind the times. She had been dozing, satisfied with her old-fashioned classical education and with herself in general, while the world had gone a step further. The American rush and "rattle" had spread to England; and with this invasion the old order was giving way in all things. The new sausage-machine, for instance, through which the pig (or maybe some other animal) progresses, entering as live pig and departing as "sausage for the million," soon replaced the old method of killing, singeing, chopping, cooking, &c. And the Eton authorities caught the infection; although they did not set themselves to invent an educational machine, on the plan of the sausage-producer, to take us in as boys and turn us out as ready-made soldiers, sailors, or lawyers, yet they decided that something must be done to alter the curriculum. Naturally, and we think rightly, they decided not to do away with classical education; but the clamours for "useful" education were incessant, and finally won their way. Science schools began to spring up; French came in, and the celebrated "German for Greek"; many weary hours began to be devoted to mathematics. And meantime what happened to the old classical hours? Did they make way for the German invader? Not in the least. It was the old story, bricks without straw, more work and no more time. The effect of the revolution did not change, but only added to, the work of the Etonian.

The ancient and widespread idea that "one does no work at Eton, of course," has, we hope, been already exploded. It was succeeded by another idea, a modification

of its predecessor: "You need not do any work at Eton unless you want to, of course." This is one of the platitudes generally delivered by one's uncle on the occasion of his giving a tip—an occasion, alas, that tends to become very rare when the nephew passes the age of seventeen! But to return; the second idea is almost as erroneous as the first. It is quite impossible, at the present time, to go through Eton shirking work systematically; the shirker is generally discovered and dropped upon, and that with no light hand. And so the last state of that shirker is many times worse than the first, for several reasons: firstly, he gets the reputation of being a shirker in the eyes of the masters, which is a terrible thing; secondly, having this reputation, he has to show up all his work well done, and with scrupulous punctuality, or he will come in for heavy punishment; thirdly, he is never given the benefit of a doubt, and often receives severe "pœnas" on occasions where the boy with the reputation for honest work would be let off, and ends by getting much additional work to do besides the ordinary school work. He gets a decidedly thin time of it at Eton. One can easily recognise him by his appearance; like a former well-known British Sovereign, he continually gives the idea of having got up an hour too late in the morning—an occurrence which, unfortunately for my comparison, is impossible in his case, with early school at 7 a.m. punctually—and of being engaged during the rest of the day in making up for his lost time. He has not time to change his collar often; and as he has a genius for collecting upon this part of his apparel ink blots rivalling those in the advertisements of Stephen's ink to be seen at railway stations, his collar is always filthy. His bootlaces are undone, and he is usually to be seen running in the street with a library of large books under his arm, which he drops at intervals—losing more of his precious time. This individual is only found in the lower part of the school. When he reaches Fifth Form, and the age of discretion, he bethinks himself of the foolishness of his ways, and changes, or at least modifies them. Occasional shirking, however, will sometimes pay, if backed up by a good working character. "Humanum est errare," think the authorities, and the offender is let off. But ah, how soon a "character" dissolves! and then the vials of wrath descend on him who has presumed to lean on the "bruised reed" of a vague

reputation for good work in the past; and great is his fall. No, shirking cannot as a rule be made to pay; we must do work, whether we wish to or no.

Since the "Useful Education" theories resulted in giving us a double amount of work to do, the Eton system must have changed greatly if what the elder generation are so fond of saying used indeed to be the case—that nobody ever worked unless he liked, for now the amount of work just mentioned is not only work to do, but work *to be done*. And a "whole schoolday" at Eton is now a pretty crowded day. "Only five hours' school," says the critics. Five hours only in school, it is true; but it is the out-of-school work that really counts, and of this there is quite sufficient to keep the boy of average brain power working hard most of the day. "Saying Lessons," "History Qs," "Construes"—*not* to be learnt with the Cribs—Science, French Exercises, Latin verses, Math, "Extra Works," and "Private Business" follow upon each other thick and fast. Friday especially is a very dog's day for most people, for it is on Friday that the bulk of the week's work is amassed by the authorities, perhaps from the false idea that it is better to "get it all over at once." There is often, in fact, too much work to get through at Eton, and the range of subjects is far too varied. With the mind torn between science and the classics, mathematics and modern languages, it is very hard to concentrate the attention on one particular subject, to make good progress in any one branch of the various arts, letters, and sciences between which we pursue our hasty and devious way. Attempting too much, we may gain only a smattering of many subjects, instead of a sound knowledge of one or two; our mind may be dazed and clouded by much change and little space for concentration; and finally, our education is sometimes by no means so thorough or so complete as it should be.

This is a novel criticism—novel, at least, in the eyes of the outside world—but one which, I think, will appear reasonable enough to Etonians. "How ridiculous!" the critic will say; "you have your full six days a week to work in, and it is impossible that the range of subjects which you have mentioned should be too large for such ample time; you have no excuse at all for getting rattled." But the critic forgets that play is quite as imperative as work in the eyes of

Eton; in fact, much more is thought of it than work in most cases. The admiration of athletics among those in the lower part of the school amounts practically to worship; and much time is naturally demanded for satisfying this worship. So not only much work, but much play has to be accounted for in an Eton day.

Without going so far as to set it down as a rule that there is too much work to do, there is certainly quite enough to keep the average person very busy. It is, however, when the unfortunate Etonian has other duties to perform in addition to his ordinary work that his life becomes most arduous. As he reaches the top of the school, he will probably find some of these duties and responsibilities devolving upon him. Captain of the House and "Keeper" of a cricket game are both positions which involve certain extra work and worry, for which there is often not sufficient time left over while doing the ordinary school work. Again, if a boy enters for any prize or scholarship for which he has to do work by himself, he will find it nearly impossible to get this work done. Above all, a position like that of editing the "Chronicle" really makes too much work to be comfortably done; the whole week becomes one mad race against time—the most unrelenting of adversaries. On the other hand, those who reach the top of the school, and escape any such duties, often manage to have a comparatively slack time, with much opportunity for sitting on "the wall" on hot days, to the envy of their overworked companions.

Finally, it certainly appears very difficult to make any great change for the better in the present curriculum, which is without doubt a sound one. Some slight modifications, however, might be beneficial in meeting some of the difficulties already commented upon. It may be taken for granted that a grounding in classics, such as we receive here, is the best basis for education. So far so good; but why mingle this classical grounding with so much science, mathematics, and French that the attention is divided instead of being concentrated? If it is to be a classical grounding, let it be so, and not a general grounding. Secondly, let there be an early opportunity for specialising after the first grounding in classics; if the boy shows no aptitude in this direction, let him pursue that subject for which he is most fitted; his bent will soon show itself. It is a fatal mistake for a boy

with no real taste for classics to be pegged down to them for all his time at Eton, as is often the case now, when a boy has to reach Upper Fifth before he can specialise in any subject. The result of this rule is that the would-be specialists can never specialise, not being good at classics, and so reaching Upper Division either too late or else not at all. Broadly, let the work be less dissipated, and let the specialists be given a chance; also, let there be not quite so much work for many of us, especially on Fridays. But it is hard to pick holes in the present system; and, difficult as it is to suit everybody with the same curriculum, it is only fair to say that under the present *régime* in must be, in nine cases out of ten, the fault of the boy, and not of the teaching, if he fails to benefit by the Eton education. And let us conclude by assuring our friend the critic that he is mistaken in thinking that the Summer Half at Eton is organised on the lines of the old motto—"Æstate pueri, si valent, satis discunt."

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Comment and criticism on this article is invited.

THE RIGHT USE OF HYPNOTISM.

Hypnotism is no new science, but the revival of a very old art, and there is strong evidence that it was known to, and practised by, the ancients. Its re-introduction in modern times was due to Mesmer, a Viennese physician, 170 years ago, after whom it took the name by which it was then, and long after known, but the mysticism and exaggeration by which he and his followers surrounded it, caused it to fall into disrepute, and to be ignored by the bulk of the medical profession of his day. Its practice was again revived, however, by Drs. Easdaile, Elliottson, and Braid, about the middle of the last century, and by the latter was placed, for the first time, upon a scientific basis, and used with great success in the treatment of